

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 160155

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SHUM, ES

SUBJECT: SECRETARY'S MEETING WITH RELIGIOUS LEADERS RE
THREAT TO JESUITS IN EL SALVADOR

SUMMARY: ON JULY 8, SECRETARY VANCE AND OTHER DEPARTMENT
OFFICIALS MET WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE RELIGIOUS COMMUN-
ITY TO DISCUSS THE RECENT WHITE WARRIOR'S UNION (UGB)
THREAT TO JESUITS IN EL SALVADOR. THE GROUP, WHICH IN-
CLUDED GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT FATHER HEALY, SOUGHT
ASSURANCES THAT THE USG WOULD FORMALLY PROTEST THE THREAT
TO HUMAN RIGHTS WITH THE GOES. WE PROVIDED SUCH ASSURAN-
CES, NOTING THAT INDEED THE TOPIC HAD ALREADY BEEN RAISED
WITH SALVADORAN OFFICIALS BOTH IN WASHINGTON AND IN EL
SALVADOR. THE SECRETARY ALSO PROMISED THE MATTER WOULD BE
ADDRESSED AGAIN WITH THE SALVADORAN AMBASSADOR AND FOREIGN
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MINISTER. THE GROUP SUGGESTED OTHER POSSIBLE ACTIONS--
SUCH AS DELAYING ASSIGNMENT OF NEW AMBASSADOR TO EL SALVA-
DOR. WE COMMENTED THAT SUCH A DELAY MIGHT PENALIZE US AS
WELL AS THE GOES. WE PROMISED THAT CAREFUL CONSIDERATION
WOULD BE GIVEN TOVARIOUS MEANS TO IMPRESS OUR CONCERNS
UPON THE GOES. THE OBJECTIVE, WE POINTED OUT, SHOULD BE
SELECTION OF METHODS LIKELY TO BE EFFECTIVE. END SUMMARY.

1. ON FRIDAY, JULY 8, SECRETARY VANCE MET WITH MEMBERS
OF THE RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY TO DISCUSS THE RECENT TERROR-

IST THREATS AGAINST THE JESUITS IN EL SALVADOR. REVEREND JAMES L. CONNOR, S.J., PRESIDENT OF THE U.S. JESUIT CONFERENCE, HAD REQUESTED THE MEETING. ACCOMPANYING HIM WERE REVEREND TIMOTHY F. HEALY, S.J., PRESIDENT OF GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY, MONSIGNOR FRANCIS J. LALLY, SECRETARY, DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND WORLD PEACE, U.S. CATHOLIC CONFERENCE, THOMAS QUIGLEY, INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE AND PEACE CENTER ON LATIN AMERICAN AFFAIRS, U.S. CATHOLIC CONFERENCE, DR. WILLIAM P. THOMPSON, PRESIDENT, NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES OF CHRIST AND DR. WILLIAM P. WIPFLER, DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RIGHTS, NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES OF CHRIST. DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE WERE THE SECRETARY, DEPUTY SECRETARY CHRISTOPHER, ASSISTANT SECRETARY TODMAN, D/HA COORDINATOR PATRICIA DERIAN, D/HA DEPUTY COORDINATOR, MARK SCHNEIDER AND COUNTRY OFFICER ELEANOR HICKS.

2. REVEREND CONNOR PRESENTED A LETTER AND SUMMARY SHEET DEPICTING THE GROUP'S VIEWS OF THE JESUITS' SITUATION IN EL SALVADOR AND OF ACTIONS WHICH THE USG MIGHT TAKE VIS-A-VIS THE GOES IN THAT REGARD. THEIR IMMEDIATE CONCERN PERTAINED TO THE WHITE WARRIORS UNION THREAT TO ASSASSINATE JESUITS REMAINING IN EL SALVADOR AFTER JULY 20.
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THEIR MORE BASIC CONCERN WAS THE PERSECUTION OF THE RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY "BY A WEALTHY AND POWERFUL MINORITY" FOR DEFENDING THE HUMAN RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES OF THE IMPOVERISHED PEASANTS. THEY EXPRESSED THEIR FEELING THAT THE SALVADORAN GOVERNMENT HAS, AT THE LEAST, SHOWN TOLERANCE OF THIS PERSECUTION. THE SUMMARY SHEET ENUMERATED INSTANCES OF THE PERSECUTION, INCLUDING THE BOMBING OF JESUIT-RUN UNIVERSITY SIX TIMES, EXCLUSION OF 8 FOREIGN BORN PRIESTS BY FORCE, THE TORTURE OF 3 PRIESTS, REFUSAL OF RE-ENTRY FOR 7 FOREIGN BORN PRIESTS, THE ASSASSINATION OF 2 SALVADORAN PRIESTS AND THE UGB ULTIMATUM. THE GROUP SPECIFICALLY REQUESTED THAT (A) THE USG FORMALLY PROTEST HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS TO THE GOES AND (B) THAT THE USG NOT APPOINT A NEW AMBASSADOR TO EL SALVADOR UNTIL SOME CONSTRUCTIVE GOES RESPONSE IS MANIFESTED.

3. ASSISTANT SECRETARY TODMAN EXPLAINED THAT IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE UGB ULTIMATUM WAS ISSUED, DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS RAISED THE SUBJECT WITH THE SALVADORAN AMBASSADOR AND SHORTLY THEREAFTER THE EMBASSY DID LIKEWISE WITH HIGH LEVEL OFFICIALS OF THE GOES. SECRETARY VANCE PROMISED THAT WE

WOULD RE-EMPHASIZE OUR CONCERN BY ADDRESSING THE ISSUE AGAIN WITH THE SALVADORAN AMBASSADOR AND FOREIGN MINISTER. TODMAN MENTIONED THE PLAN TO SEND DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY ARELLANO TO DISCUSS THE MATTER WITH ROMERO. (HE INFORMED THEM THAT THE TWO WERE PERSONALLY ACQUAINTED, BUT

THAT THE MISSION WOULD BE STRICTLY IN AN OFFICIAL CAPACITY.) TODMAN OBSERVED THAT THE UGB THREAT OCCURRED IN THE WANING DAYS OF THE OUTGOING ADMINISTRATION AND THAT WE HOPED TO USE OUR INITIAL CONTACT WITH THE NEW REGIME TO DIRECT GOES ATTITUDES ON HUMAN RIGHTS INTO MORE POSITIVE VEIN.

4. SECRETARY VANCE INQUIRED ABOUT THE INFORMATION WHICH THE CLERGYMEN POSSESSED. THEY REPLIED THAT THROUGH THE CONFIDENTIAL

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GRAPEVINE THEY RECEIVE A CONSTANT FLOW OF INFORMATION AND THAT "THE SITUATION SEEMS TO BE HOLDING." THEY ALSO REPORTED THAT THE PROVINCIAL JESUIT'S HOUSE IS SURROUNDED BY GUARDS, ALTHOUGH HE CAN MOVE ABOUT. THEY FELT THAT HE WAS BEING "GUARDED" PERHAPS AS MUCH TO KEEP HIM UNDER SURVEILLANCE AS TO PROTECT HIM. IN RESPONSE TO SECRETARY VANCE'S QUERY ABOUT THE NUMBER AND LOCATION OF THE PRIESTS, THE GROUP REPLIED THAT THE JESUITS NUMBER 50 AND ARE SCATTERED AROUND THE COUNTRY, ALTHOUGH CONCENTRATED IN THE MAJOR URBAN AREAS, NOT LIVING IN CENTERS AS THEY NORMALLY WOULD, BECAUSE OF THE THREAT TO THEIR LIVES. THOMAS QUIGLEY OF THE U.S. CATHOLIC CONFERENCE WAS RECENTLY IN EL SALVADOR. SECRETARY VANCE ASKED WHAT HE HAD FOUND. QUIGLEY SAID HE WAS GIVEN NUMEROUS DOCUMENTS PREPARED BY CLERGYMEN IN EL SALVADOR (WHOSE IDENTITY SHOULD NATURALLY BE PROTECTED) WHICH INCLUDE MAINLY COPIES OF PRESS ITEMS ATTACKING THE CHURCH IN EL SALVADOR. QUIGLEY SAID LARGE LANDOWNERS AND INDUSTRIALISTS PAID FOR SUCH ATTACKS. HE SAID HE WOULD FURNISH A COMPLETE TRANSLATION OF THE DOCUMENTS TO THE DEPARTMENT. ANOTHER MEMBER OF THE GROUP POINTED OUT THAT THE PROBLEM WAS NOT LIMITED TO THE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY AND WAS SPILLING OVER INTO OTHER RELIGIOUS CIRCLES. SPECIFICALLY, A BAPTIST LEADER HAD RECEIVED TELEPHONE THREATS AND THE BAPTIST CHURCH (WHICH HAD EXPRESSED SUPPORT FOR THE ARCHBISHOP AS WELL AS HAVING COMMENTED ON THE SALVADORAN ELECTIONS) WAS CONSIDERED SUBVERSIVE, BECAUSE OF ITS RURAL AID PROPOSALS.

5. FATHER CONNOR SUGGESTED THAT THE USG DELAY APPOINTING AN AMBASSADOR TO EL SALVADOR IN ORDER TO SIGNAL USG DISSATISFACTION WITH THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN EL SALVADOR. HE SAID THAT THE WEALTHY COMMUNITY WOULD BE GREATLY

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AFFECTED BY SUCH AN ACTION SINCE THE EMBASSY IS A "NEURALGIC" POINT OF CONTACT BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. SECRETARY VANCE REPLIED THAT A JUDGMENT WOULD HAVE TO BE MADE, WEIGHING THE BENEFITS AND DEFICIENCIES OF NOT HAVING

AN AMBASSADOR THERE. ASSISTANT SECRETARY TODMAN AGREED, MENTIONING THAT AMBASSADOR LOZANO WAS GOOD BECAUSE HE WAS ALWAYS PRESSING HOME U.S. HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERNS WITH THE GOES. DEPUTY SECRETARY CHRISTOPHER COMMENTED THAT THE MORE DIFFICULT THE PROBLEMS WITH A COUNTRY, THE MORE IMPORTANT IT IS TO HAVE AN AMBASSADOR ABLE TO REPORT ON EVENTS. THE GROUP THEN ASKED ABOUT SECURITY ASSISTANCE AND WHETHER IT WAS CLEAR WHAT THE GOES RENUNCIATION INCLUDED. WE SAID THAT WAS STILL BEING CLARIFIED. THE CLERGYMEN SUGGESTED THAT PIPELINE ITEMS MIGHT BE HELD UP AS ANOTHER MEANS TO MANIFEST OUR DISSATISFACTION TO THE GOES. WE SAID THAT THERE WERE MANY LEGAL RAMIFICATIONS THAT WOULD HAVE TO BE ANALYZED IN CONNECTION WITH SUCH A MEASURE. FATHER CONNOR STRESSED THAT THE WEALTHY SALVADORANS WANT TO MAINTAIN THE STATUS QUO AT ANY COST AND THAT THE CHURCH, CONCERNED WITH IMPROVING THE LOT OF SALVADORAN PEASANTS, FINDS SUCH AN ATTITUDE REPREHENSIBLE. HE ADDED THAT HE CONSIDERS EL SALVADOR "A CLASSIC SHOWCASE" OF THE PROBLEMS OF CHANGING THE INEQUITIES OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS. HE SAID THAT CHURCH LEADERS IN EL SALVADOR DO NOT EXPECT IMMEDIATE ANSWERS TO THESE INEQUITIES, BELIEVING THAT IT MAY TAKE 15 TO 20 YEARS TO EFFECT A REAL CHANGE.

6. PAT DERIAN SAID SHE WAS CONCERNED WITH THE IMMEDIATE PROBLEM OF THE TERRORIST THREAT. SHE COMMENTED THAT TERRORIST GROUPS, SUCH AS THE UGB, TEND TO ACT WITH THE COOPERATION OF BENIGN PROTECTION OF THE GOVERNMENT. THEREFORE, SHE RECOMMENDED, ANY REPRESENTATION BY THE USG TO THE GOES SHOULD PLACE SOME RESPONSIBILITY UPON THE GOES. WHILE ACKNOWLEDGING THAT THERE ARE LEFTIST TERRORISTS, TOO, SHE NOTED THAT PARA-POLICE ORGANIZATIONS FUNCTION

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UNDER VARIOUS TITLES AND THAT EVEN POLICE OR ARMY WEAPONS ARE USED BY THEM. SHE SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD NOT BE PERMITTED TO ABSOLVE ITSELF OF SOME RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ACTIONS, AND THREATS, OF SUCH RIGHTIST TERRORIST GROUPS. AS FAR AS SENDING AN AMBASSADOR IS CONCERNED, SHE SAID THE GESTURE MIGHT BE USEFUL BUT ONLY IN THE SHORT RUN. SHE EXPLAINED THAT SOME HIGH LEVEL AND HIGHLY RESPECTED PERSON NEEDS TO BE THERE TO ARTICULATE AND ACTUATE USG POLICY. SECRETARY VANCE ADDED THAT AN AMBASSADOR'S PRESENCE IS IMPORTANT ALSO TO ENSURE ACCURATE AND PERCEPTIVE REPORTING.

7. DEPUTY SECRETARY CHRISTOPHER SUGGESTED THAT IT IS WORTH EXPLORING APPROACHES THROUGH THE OAS OR OTHER COUNTRIES IN THE REGION IN ORDER TO MOVE THE GOES INTO MORE CONSTRUCTIVE PATHS. SECRETARY VANCE AGREED, NOTING THAT SUCH APPROACHES WOULD ACCORD WITH OUR DESIRE TO STRENGTHEN THE INTER-AMERICAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION.

8. PAT DERIAN ASKED ABOUT THE NATIONALITIES OF THE JESUITS AND WAS INFORMED THAT NONE WAS AMERICAN, 12 TO 20 WERE SALVADORANS AND THE REST A MIXTURE. SHE SAID SHE WAS INTERESTED IN WHAT MEANS EXISTED FOR PROTECTING THEM, WHETHER THEY HAD ANY CONTINGENCY PLANS OR WOULD LEAVE IF ASSASSINATION INDEED ABOUT TO BE COMMITTED. THE CLERGY-MEN REPLIED THAT THE JESUITS WERE RESOLVED TO STAY WITH THE PEASANTS. TO FLEE, THEY FELT, WOULD BE ABANDONMENT OF THE HOPE OF THE PEOPLE. DERIAN SAID THAT THE BEST WAY TO RESPOND TO A THREAT IS NOT TO PERMIT IT TO BE EFFECTIVE OR TO SUCCEED. SHE SAID IT IS NOT VALUABLE FOR THE PRIESTS TO BE SITTING DUCKS. THE GROUP REPLIED THAT THE PRIESTS WERE IN FACT STAYING UNDERGROUND. FURTHER-MORE, RELIGIOUS LEADERS, INCLUDING THE ARCHBISHOP OF SAN
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SALVADOR, HAVE MET SEVERAL TIMES WITH PRESIDENT ROMERO, ALTHOUGH THE ARCHBISHOP HAD ABSENTED HIMSELF FROM ROMERO'S INAUGURATION. THIS IS AN ATTEMPT TO FIND SOME RECONCILIATION AND IMPROVEMENTS OF CHURCH-STATE RELATIONS. ALSO THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS WANT TO MAKE CLEAR THEY ARE NOT TO BE IDENTIFIED WITH GUERRILLA MOVEMENTS IN EL SALVADOR. ASSISTANT SECRETARY TODMAN COMMENTED THAT IT WAS IMPORTANT THAT CLERGYMEN NOT BE IDENTIFIED WITH LEFTIST TERRORISTS AND THAT A CLEAR DISTINCTION BE MADE. THE GROUP NOTED THAT THE RIGHT DELIBERATELY CHOOSES TO CONFUSE THE CHURCH ACTIVITIES WITH SUBVERSIVE ONES. THE GROUP CONCLUDED BY MENTIONING THAT A WAVE OF CONCERN IS BUILDING UP IN THE UNITED STATES AS WELL AS IN OTHER COUNTRIES. LETTERS AND WIRES ARE BEING SENT TO THE SALVADORAN EMBASSY IN THE U.S. SOON THERE WILL BE SIMILAR EXPRESSION OF CONCERN IN EUROPE, PARTICULARLY GERMANY, FRANCE AND ENGLAND. THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES AND THE NATIONAL COUNCIL ARE DEVOTING ATTENTION TO THE PLIGHT OF THE PRIESTS IN EL SALVADOR. THE GROUP SAID THAT THEY DO HAVE RESOURCES AND PEOPLE IN THE FIELD AND WILL BE HAPPY TO RELAY TO THE DEPARTMENT ANY INFORMATION THAT COMES THEIR WAY. DEPUTY SECRETARY CHRISTOPHER SAID THAT WE NEED TO ANALYZE ALL THE POSSIBLE CHANNELS--MULTILATERAL, BILATERAL AND UNILATERAL--FOR COPING WITH THE PROBLEM. SECRETARY VANCE SAID THAT WE WOULD DO PRECISELY THAT AND WOULD STAY IN TOUCH WITH REVEREND CONNOR AND THE OTHERS.

9. FYI: AFTER THIS MEETING, ASSISTANT SECRETARY TODMAN CALLED IN THE SALVADORAN CHARGE, MAURICIO GONZALEZ TO UNDERSCORE THE USG CONCERN ABOUT THE UGB ULTIMATUM AND LACK OF GOES PUBLIC RESPONSE DENOUNCING THE THREAT. HE ALSO TOLD THE CHARGE OF THE IMMINENT ARELLANO MEETING WITH PRESIDENT ROMERO. END FYI. VANCE

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